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HOUSE PASSES RESPONSIBLE, BALANCED BUDGET

~Per-Student Funding Up; Focus on Recharging Economy and Creating Jobs for Floridians~

TALLAHASSEE, FL – The House today passed a \$65.1 billion budget which increases per-student funding, protects per-student classroom dollars, continues to fund health care services to those in need, and makes sure that public safety is maintained.

“Everyone acknowledges that these are very tough times, that people are hurting and that we had to make tough decisions. With that in mind, I commend Chairman Llorente and Chairman Rivera for their leadership and tireless efforts to craft a compassionate and sensible state budget,” stated Representative Adam Hasner (R-Delray Beach). “The House budget proposal reflects our focus on getting Florida’s economy going again and better-position the state to benefit from the eventual turnaround in the economy.”

“The budget process was inclusive and open and we have made very tough decisions in a very tough economy. We made sure that our job creation tools were conserved all the while making sure that we lived within our means,” stated Representative David Rivera (R-Miami). “We crafted a responsible budget in the same way that Florida’s families approach their budget and knowing that the money we are spending is not ours, it belongs to the taxpayers who have entrusted us with their hard-earned dollars.”

“It is no secret that Florida is facing unprecedented economic challenges. In this context, my House colleagues and our council and committee members stayed focused on meeting our responsibility to Florida’s families and businesses,” stated Representative Marcelo Llorente (R-Miami). “As we move forward, the bottom line is clear – Florida’s budget problems will only be solved by strengthening our economy and creating jobs for our fellow Floridians.”

The House Budget proposal includes:

EDUCATION

Per-Student Funding-

- ✓ Raises per-student funding by over \$30 per student to a statewide average of \$6891.
- ✓ Increases funding for K-12 students by over 43%, or over \$2087 per-student, over the past ten years.

(more)

State University System-

- ✓ Includes a 7% tuition increase. Also, the House is proposing to provide the Board of Trustees of each individual state university the ability to charge a tuition differential to help improve undergraduate education for their students. The total increase may amount to no more than 15%.
- ✓ At \$3792, the average in-state tuition for Florida's public four-year universities is still well below the national average of \$6585, and among the lowest in the country.

Florida Resident Access Grant (FRAG)-

- ✓ FRAG was funded at \$84.2 million, which will provide a maximum award of \$2529.

HEALTH CARE

- ✓ Utilizes federal stimulus funds, including the increased federal Medicaid matching rate, to restore, fund and retain services to the greatest extent possible, including:
 - Medically Needy
 - MEDS-AD
 - Cash Assistance
 - Homeless Prevention
 - Foster Care
 - Domestic Violence Prevention
 - Victim Services and Law Enforcement
 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Administration
 - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part C
- ✓ Continues optional Medicaid adult dental, hearing, podiatric, chiropractic and hospice services, and continues the adult vision services in a slightly modified form by allowing new eyeglass frames every two years instead of every year.
- ✓ Fully funds the Low Income Pool, Disproportionate Share and Hospital Exemptions Programs.
- ✓ Includes an additional \$11.5 million in federal stimulus funds for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Part C) program administered by DOH. This 20.4% increase will increase early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities.

Department of Children and Families (DCF)-

- ✓ Increases by \$42.3 million, a 1.5% increase, over the Fiscal Year 2008-09 budget.

Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD)-

- ✓ Increases by \$18.8 million, a 1.8% increase, over the Fiscal Year 2008-09 budget.

Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA)-

- ✓ Funding for DOEA is increased by \$334.2 million over the 2008-09 appropriation for the Department.

Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA)-

- ✓ Increases \$12.5 million, which is a 21% increase over the 2008-09 appropriation for the Department.

Medically Needy-

- ✓ Continues the optional Medically Needy Program to its current extent of coverage.

Veterans' Benefit and Assistance Funding-

- ✓ The House's proposal is a 56% increase over the funding provided in the Fiscal Year 2008-09 budget.

(more)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Judicial Areas-

- ✓ There are no reductions that will hinder constitutional due process.

Other areas vital to the judicial process were also protected from reductions. They include:

- State Attorneys – Includes \$310.1 million in General Revenue and \$74.1 million in Trust Funds.
- \$1.5 million in federal stimulus dollars for Drug Court is also included.
- Public Defenders – Includes \$175.2 million in General Revenue and \$27.5 million in Trust Funds.
- \$1.5 million in federal stimulus dollars for Drug Court is also included.
- Capital Collateral Regional Counsels – Includes \$7 million dollars to provide this service.
- Regional Conflict Counsels – Includes \$34.7 million in General Revenue and \$1.1 million in Trust Funds.

Department of Corrections-

- ✓ There are no reductions in vital probation or security officers who work with offenders and protect the public.
- ✓ \$2.8 million in funding for 1,300 new prison beds and \$59 million for security personnel and operations is proposed to staff additional prison space, and therefore eliminate the need for early release.

Department of Juvenile Justice-

- ✓ There are no reductions to either PACE Center for Girls or CINS/FINS (Children in Need of Services/Families in Need of Services). An additional \$0.50 surcharge will be added to each license tag renewal (\$1.00 - \$1.50) to maintain current funding for juvenile diversion programs.

Department of Law Enforcement-

- ✓ There are no proposed reductions to sworn officers.
- ✓ No crime labs are affected by proposed budget reductions.

A total of \$80.6 million (\$52 million for local government and \$28 million for state government) in Federal stimulus dollars for criminal and civil justice issues can be used for the following:

- Law enforcement programs
- Prevention and education programs
- Drug treatment and enforcement programs
- Crime victim and witness programs

FEDERAL STIMULUS DOLLARS

The House used federal stimulus dollars thoughtfully and responsibly. The House knows that federal dollars are not a silver bullet to solving Florida's budget problems. The state's budget problems will only be solved by strengthening Florida's economy and helping create jobs for Floridians.

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